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THE FIGHT AT FINNSBURG

Perhaps none of the shorter Old English poems has been more frequently edited, annotated, and discussed than the brief fragment of about fifty lines which is the subject of this essay. The student is not obliged to hunt for it in Grein-Wülker. It can be found not only in Kluge's *Lesebuch* and other Old English Readers but also appended to the epic in most editions of *Beowulf*. This is owing to its connection with the *Finn Episode*, as it is called, the *lēoð* or *ƿyð* which Hrothgar's *scop* delivers before the assembled Geats and Danes at the feast of victory over Grendel. The four most recent editions of *Beowulf*, those of Holthausen, Schücking, Sedgefield, and Chambers, have all included the *Fight at Finnsburg*; Sedgefield gives only the text, the others annotation and glossary also. Again, several scholars have laboured to reconstruct a Finn saga from what may be learned from Episode and Fragment. Among these are Möller in his *Das Altenglische Volksepos*, 1883, and more recently Trautmann (*Finn und Hildebrand*, Bonn, *Beiträge* VII) and Boer (*Finnsage und Nibelungensage*, in the *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, XLVII. 125 ff.) And there is an excellent criticism and discussion of the Fragment in Brandl's scholarly *Geschichte der altenglischen Literatur*.

One must therefore plead some apology for returning to a poem which eminent scholars have already dealt with so fully. The following essay seeks to suggest two things. First, that no modern editor has treated the text of the Fragment with sufficient conservatism. Second, that the commonly accepted conclusions about the original date and the original home rest upon uncertain evidence and find hardly any support from the poem itself.

In proportion to its length the *Fight at Finnsburg* has probably received or suffered more emendation than any other undamaged piece of Old English verse. There is rather more justification than usual. For the manuscript of the Fragment is now lost. It survives to us only in a transcript, published in 1705, in his *Linguarum Septentrionalium Thesaurus*, by George Hickes, a non-juring divine who took a then unusual interest in the old Northern languages. The text of the poem as handed down by him is in several lines obviously corrupt, and scholars are inclined to assume

that these corruptions are partly due to the inaccuracy of Hickes's transcription. But since the manuscript is lost there is no certain proof of this. The corruptions may quite well have all existed in the original. Mr. Chambers therefore is not altogether judicial when in a brief note before the text of *Finnsburg* (*Beowulf*, p. 158) he speaks of "Hickes' very inaccurate transcript." One thing, however, may be allowed. Hickes seems occasionally to have misread the *a* of his manuscript as *u*. He has *weuna* for *weana* in line 27, *eastun* in line 3 and *duru* in line 44 where the original had probably *eastan* and *dura*. But these mistakes do not argue any very unscholarly carelessness, for, as Mr. Chambers himself points out in his footnote to line 3, *a* and *u* in Old English manuscripts are easily and often confused.

Before considering the text of the *Fight at Finnsburg* I should like first of all to express my entire agreement with the principles of "strict conservatism" in text-criticism which Mr. Chambers lays down in the Introduction to his *Beowulf*. "Where there is even a sporting chance of the MS. reading being correct I retain it." Every editor of an Old English poem should inscribe this sentence upon his memory and direct his judgment by it. Of course even then uniformity of opinion would be impossible. There will always be disagreement over what makes the sporting chance; there will always be disagreement over the limits between strict conservatism and pedantic conservatism. It certainly appears to me that in editing both *Beowulf* and *The Fight at Finnsburg* Mr. Chambers sometimes forgets his own sound principle. There is surely even more than a sporting chance that in line 1537 of the epic the *eaxle* of the manuscript should be retained.

Ʒefēn; þā be eaxle —nalas for fāhðe mearn—

Ʒūð-Ʒēata lēod Ʒrendles mōdor.

Mr. Chambers himself admits the sporting chance in his footnote, and yet reads *feaxe*. In the *Fight at Finnsburg* he has allowed so many emendations of Hickes's transcript that his text is not at all more conservative than that given by Dr. Sedgefield, who neither professes nor practices the strict conservatism which Mr. Chambers defends.

Most of the disputable emendations in Mr. Chambers's edition are due to considerations of metre. "In revising the text," he writes, "I have made it my chief aim to retain that conservatism which characterised Mr. Wyatt's edition. In fifty places I have,

however, felt compelled, mainly on metrical grounds, to desert the MS., where Mr. Wyatt adhered to it." It is time that some protest was made against this "desertion of the manuscript on metrical grounds," a practice which in recent years has become altogether too common. It is mainly due to the somewhat tardy recognition of the work of the great German scholar Sievers in establishing the general principles of the Old English metrical system. In 1884, in the tenth volume of *Beiträge zur deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, Sievers gave to the world his scheme of the five types of half-lines in Old English verse, a scheme which, by its great merit of comparative simplicity, has, notwithstanding some pertinent criticisms by Kaluza and a most elaborate and forbidding new scheme evolved by Trautmann, held its ground ever since. A very compact yet lucid account of it will be found in his chapter on *Aligermanische Metrik* in Paul's *Grundriss der Germanischen Philologie*. Sievers very rightly takes *Beowulf* as the standard for Old English metre. In his articles in *Beiträge X*, he carefully analyses the half-lines of the epic, brings them under five distinct types, formulates rules about the position of the alliterative syllables, and shows that greater freedom is allowed in the first half-line than in the second. He examines the other longer Old English poems and finds that metrically they correspond closely to *Beowulf*. The results which he has attained by this method of comparative analysis are undoubtedly most valuable. But both he himself and his followers have pressed them too far. His rules are no more than generalisations. They are generalisations from the practice of Old English poets. And, as is always the case in the thorny province of metrical study, it is most unsafe to promote these generalisations, except some of the most elementary and obvious, to the status of absolute rules or binding laws. Yet this is exactly what many modern scholars and editors do. They seem to forget that the Old English poet had no philological degree from a German University. It is most unlikely, indeed, that he composed his verse according to any definitely formulated system of metrical rules. He relied only on his ear and his memory. His memory supplied him with typical half-lines from the poems of predecessors, just as it supplied him with a conventional phraseology which tended to become a stiff poetic diction. His ear told him how closely his own lines conformed to the metrical movements of these typical half-lines.

It must certainly be admitted that most Old English poets were very conservative in their art or technique. They employed a stereotyped language and repeated stereotyped motives. They were equally conservative as regards metre; hence it is that Sievers has been able to formulate general laws even about quite small details of their normal verse-system. But it would be absurd to suppose that all individuality was lost in imitation. It would be absurd to suppose that an Old English poet did not occasionally allow himself some metrical license. Yet this is more than most modern critics and editors are disposed to permit him. They will not tolerate a line or half-line which offends against one of their cherished rules. Apparently an exception must not exist. The text must be corrupt; a dull-eared scribe must be at fault; the line must be chopped and changed, twisted and transposed, until it is properly conventional. Such is particularly and notoriously the method of Trautmann and his Bonn seminar, who

"smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tally."

A not too distant analogy to this method of criticism is Bentley's rewriting of *Paradise Lost*, which he supposed to be full of textual corruptions due to the carelessness and ignorance of those who transcribed for the blind poet. The absurdity of the results is well known.

The more elementary of Sievers's generalisations of course approach much nearer to universal truth than do those on more particular points. But even the most obvious are not without exceptions. The first rule about alliteration which he lays down in *Altgermanische Metrik* runs:—"Every two half-lines are united into a full line by alliteration." This seems the root principle of Old English alliterative metre; and yet exceptions to it occur. As Sievers himself shows, there occasionally appear in West Germanic verse lines corresponding to the *Ljōþa hātr* in Old Norse, single lines without caesura alliterating within themselves. These are found, for instance, in the Exeter Gnostic Verses, e. g. ll. 162-4:-

Wærlēas mon ond wonhȳdiȳ,
ætrenmōd ond unȳetrēow,
þæs ne ȳȳmeð ȳod.

Even so fundamental a rule is therefore not absolutely universal. So it is not surprising that exceptions occur to nearly all the more

particular rules or generalisations which Sievers and his followers have formulated. To take an example, Sievers finds from the general practice in *Beowulf* that a metrical accent must fall upon a long syllable or be resolved upon two short syllables, while it may fall upon a short syllable only if the preceding syllable bears a main or secondary accent. Most recent editors seem to regard this as a law of the Medes and Persians. Yet in *Beowulf* itself there are at least three exceptions. In 3157a, 1942b, and 1285b we find half-lines belonging to type A in which the second accent falls upon a short syllable without a secondary accent immediately preceding, e. g.,

3157 hlǣw on (h)liðe, sē wæs hēah ond brād.

1942 þætte freoðuwebbe fēores onsæce.

1285 þonne heoru bunden, hamere ʒepuren.

Holthausen and Schücking expand the first of these to *hlǣw on (h)liðes nosan*; the second is generally altered to *fēores onsēce*; the third almost invariably appears as *hamere ʒeprūen*. In the last case there is some justification for the change in the fact that *ʒepuren* is an obscure word. Still, it is not absolutely unique in Old English. It also occurs in the first line of Riddle 91 (Grein 87), again in the phrase *homere ʒepuren*. But the evidence of two manuscripts counts for nothing against a nineteenth-century metrical rule; *ʒepuren* in all modern editions becomes *ʒeprūen*, an isolated form found only in the comparatively late *Metra* of Alfred's translation of *Boethius*. Surely such lines are quite as likely to be exceptional departures from the usual custom as to be textually corrupt. In other poems there are quite a number of examples in which Sievers's rule is not observed. It is twice broken in the Storm Riddles, e. g. II. 4b, *þrāzum wræce*, and IV. 66a, *meahtum ʒemanad*. It is twice broken in successive lines of Riddle 28, line 13a, *strenʒo biʒtolen*, and line 14a, *mæʒene biʒnumen*. It is three times broken in Riddle 84. The latest editors of the Riddles, Dr. Tupper and Mr. Wyatt, have very wisely made no change in such lines, for which they have been taken to task by the pedantic Trautmann in last year's *Anglia*.

In the study of Old English metre the work of each separate poet should be taken by itself. This is the only safe course to follow. The metre of the *Fight at Finnsburg*, for example, should be studied independently, without any reference to preconceived rules which have been deduced from an examination of the metre

of *Beowulf* or of Cynewulf's poems. When it is found to differ in some respects from the metrical system of Cynewulf or the author of *Beowulf*, such points of difference should simply be regarded as characteristic of the unknown author. They should not be ascribed to corruption of the text unless there is other evidence in support of this, unless, that is, the forms of the words are extraordinary, or the syntax is most unusual, or no good sense can be obtained. In the metre of *Beowulf* and of Cynewulf's works, for example, it seems a fixed rule that in the second half-line only the first accented syllable can bear the alliteration. The second must not alliterate and both must not alliterate. Now in the *Fight at Finnsburg* this rule is not always observed. In the text handed down by Hickes, lines 28 and 41 run as follows:—

28. Ðā wæs on healle wælslihta ȝehlyn.

41. Hīȝ fuhton fīf dāȝas, swā hira nān ne fēol.

In both these the alliteration in the second half-line falls not on the first but on the second accented syllable. The conclusion which ought to be drawn—and the natural conclusion—is that the author of the *Fight at Finnsburg* was lax in his versification and did not always follow the regular metrical arrangement. But this is not what the editors conclude. Almost all decide that the text is corrupt, and suggest or adopt emendations to set the lines right. And yet the *Fight at Finnsburg* is certainly not alone in breaking regular practice in this respect. The *Battle of Maldon* is another offender. Lines 45, 75 and 288 read

45. ȝehȳr(s)t þū, sǣlida, hwæt þis folc seȝeð.

75. wīȝan wīȝheardne, sē wæs hāten Wulfstān.

288. raðe wearð æt hilde Offa forhēawen.

There are other lines in this poem in which both the accented syllables in the second half alliterate. Some of the *Riddles* also bear *The Fight at Finnsburg* company. Riddle IV. 36 and LVI. 14 are two examples out of several:—

IV. 36 Hwīlum ic þurhræse þæt mē on bæce rīdeð.

LVI. 14 ȝoldhilted sweord. Nū mē þisses ȝieddes.

In these cases even Dr. Tupper and Mr. Wyatt are enough under the subjection of metrical rules to transpose.

Such irregularities of metre—irregularities when *Beowulf* or the poems of Cynewulf are taken as a metrical standard—can be explained in various ways. They may be due to the ignorance of the poet. He may not have had sufficient knowledge of earlier

poetry to be able to follow the normal metrical system with exactness. He may have written irregular lines without knowing them to be irregular. But this certainly does not justify a modern scholar with perhaps a wider knowledge of Old English verse in attempting to amend or correct the lines at fault. In modern editions of *The Winter's Tale* we do not correct Shakespeare when he gives Bohemia a sea-coast. Or, again, the irregularities may possibly be quite intentional. The poet may have been a metrical reformer who wished to extend the varieties of Old English verse-lines. Or he may have been, in Browning's own words, "a Browning, he neglects the form"; interested above all in his story or his matter, he may have been careless of strict metrical practice. Either of these causes is sufficient to account for metrical irregularity without having recourse to the facile explanation of corruption of the text. An analogy may be permitted. The blank verse of *The Duchess of Malfi* or *The White Devil* is often very different from the usual blank verse of Shakespeare. In general it is looser and closer to prose. But no one has ventured to deduce from this that Webster has suffered from a careless printer working from a much thumbled stage manuscript. The peculiarities of Webster's blank verse are due to Webster himself. Similarly the peculiarities of the metre in the *Fight at Finnsburg* or the *Battle of Maldon* should be attributed to the author and not to a negligent scribe. An excellently vigorous protest against the habit of regarding an Old English text as a farrago of scribal blunders has been made by Dr. Tupper in "Textual Criticism as a Pseudo-Science," in Volume 25 of the *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*.

When the metre of *Beowulf* or of Cynewulf's poems is taken as standard, it may be stated as a general rule, to which exceptions certainly do occur, that the later a poem is the less regular its metre tends to be. When we come to Middle English we find that the alliterative measure has undergone many changes. The metre of Layamon's *Brut* is very different from the metre of *Beowulf*. It is much looser and less artistic. The process of degeneration, if one may call it so, began in Old English times. It was probably largely assisted by the practice of writing rhythmical alliterative prose. Examples of this are some of the homilies of Aelfric, such as his *Life of St. Oswald*. In the Old English *Chronicle* of the eleventh century there are also alliterative passages, and

it is not easy to say whether some of these are meant to be verse or prose. As we have seen, there are frequent metrical irregularities in the *Battle of Maldon*, a poem which must have been composed soon after the battle itself in 993 A. D. These irregularities are probably partly due to the comparatively late date of composition. Conversely, when a poem is often irregular metrically, it may very likely be of later date than usual. But faulty metre only suggests and by no means proves a late date of composition, for it may be due simply to the individuality of the author.

In the *Fight at Finnsburg* one finds many metrical irregularities for so short a poem. In his third edition of *Beowulf* Holt-hausen makes in the forty-nine lines of the fragment no fewer than nine changes which are solely for metrical reasons. Every one of them is superfluous. In his text Mr. Chambers admits only two of these (ll. 30, 41), but he approves of others in his notes. Yet there is a particular reason why it is not surprising to find the metre of the *Fight at Finnsburg* somewhat different from the metre of the heroic or religious epics. As Brandl very clearly shows in his *Geschichte der altenglischen Literatur*, *The Fight at Finnsburg* is a type of narrative poem quite different from *Beowulf* or *Waldhere*. It tells its story not in a leisurely but in a brief and rapid fashion; its style is distinctly abrupt. There is nothing of the expansiveness of *Beowulf* in it. Brandl concludes that it represents the heroic lay in contrast to the heroic epic. Its relation to *Beowulf* bears a certain analogy to the relation between the ballad and the romance, between *Cadyow Castle* and the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. When style and method of narrative are thus different, it is not at all wonderful that the metre should be found different also. There is about as little justification for setting right the metrical irregularities as there would be for setting right the irregularities, if they can be called so, of the style or the way of telling the story.

I have already mentioned two metrical rules, the rule about the alliteration in the second half-line and the rule about the falling of a metrical accent on a short syllable, to which exceptions are often found and which therefore should not be regarded as absolute rules or made the excuse for textual emendation. The same probably holds good of the rule that when a noun and a verb occur in the first half-line the noun must alliterate. There are

two exceptions in *Beowulf*, line 1537, already quoted, and line 758.
 ǵemunde þā sē ȝōða mǣ; Hīȝelāces.

Most editors, including Holthausen, Schücking, Sedgefield, and Chambers, determined that the rule should not be broken, change *eaxle* to *feaxe* in 1537 and *ȝōða* to *mōdȝa* in 758. Since the verb quite frequently bears the alliteration in preference to the noun in the second half-line, it is difficult to see why this may not have been permitted by some poets, as a sort of metrical license, in the first half-line also. The poet of *Beowulf* is not alone in the practice. In *Riddle IX*, 4 we find

healde mine wīsan, hlēoþre ne miþe.

In *Riddle XXV*, 2

hwīlum beorce swā hund, hwīlum blǣte swā ȝāt.

In *Maldon* 7,

hē lēt him þā of handon lēofne flēoȝan.

And line 11 of the *Fight at Finnsburg* is probably another example.

Another recently formulated metrical rule which also should not be allowed to be the sole reason for an alteration of the text is the rule that in the first half-line the alliteration should not fall on the last syllable only. Old English poets certainly seem to have avoided placing the most emphatic word immediately before the caesura, but all were not equally scrupulous. The rule is broken four times in the *Battle of Maldon*, e. g., line 22,

þā hē hæfde þæt folc fæjere ȝetrymmed,

and similarly lines 184, 189, 224. Line 18 of the *Dream of the Rood* is another example,

Hwæðre ic þurh þæt ȝold onȝytan meahte.

Other instances occur in the *Riddles*, e. g. XXXII, 13,

hwonne ær hēo cræft hyre cȝþan mōte.

So there is little need to follow Trautmann and Holthausen in amending *Finnsburg* 22 and 46.

A fifth metrical rule on whose absolute force little reliance should be placed is concerned with half-lines belonging to type E. Second half-lines of the metrical form $\text{—} \text{̇} \times \text{—}$ are not uncommon; Sievers (*Beiträge* X p. 264) cites five from *Beowulf* (ll. 463, 623, 783, 1009, 2779). But similar first half-lines are rare. There is in all *Beowulf* only one certain instance, the much-disputed *eȝsode eorl* of line 6. Occasional examples may be met with in other poems. In *Riddle* 72. 14a we find *earfoða dǣl*, in *Maldon* 53a *Æpelredes eard*, 203a *Æpelredes eorl*, in *Exodus* 332a *Rābenes*

sunu, in *Daniel* 601a *Sennera feld*. Most of these are half-lines containing proper names, which goes to show that in Old English (as in classical) verse some metrical licence was permissible in introducing these. There are enough examples to show that this form of type E, though apparently considered rather light for the first half-line, was not absolutely tabooed. Therefore when we find still another instance in line 2a of the *Fight at Finnsburg*, there is no need to follow Trautmann and Holthausen and transpose.

Another metrical rule whose potency requires to be even more strongly denied is the rule formulated by Sievers and especially worshipped at Bonn that no prelude (*aufтакт*) is permitted before the main stave (or the first accented syllable) of the second half-line in types A, D, and E. Sievers himself cites (*Beiträge* X. p. 234 and p. 256) at least eight exceptions in half-lines of type A in *Beowulf* and two exceptions in half-lines of type D. For example, *swā sē bebūzeð* in line 1223 b and *þā sec3 wisode* in line 402 b. There is probably no Old English poem of any length in which similar exceptions may not be found. Lines 3 b and 7 b of the *Fight at Finnsburg* are examples. In *Textual Criticism as a Pseudo-Science* Dr. Tupper points out the absurdity of making this rule a fetish.

There remains one last metrical point bearing on *The Fight at Finnsburg*. In *Altgermanische Metrik* Sievers makes a distinction between the *Normalvers* and the *Schwellvers*. In Old English *Schwellverse* or extended lines occur sporadically and generally in groups, e. g. *Beowulf* 1163 to 1168. They contain three accents in each half-line instead of the usual two. The first half-line has generally double alliteration. Now lines seem occasionally to appear which are a combination of extended line and normal line, that is, in which the first half-line belongs to the extended type and contains three accents while the second half-line belongs to the normal type and contains only two accents. Or the first half-line may be normal and the second half-line extended. In his discussion of the *Schwellvers* in *Beiträge* XII. 454 ff. Sievers cites a number of examples of such lines. Many of these examples, however, are rather doubtful, since, as Sievers himself points out, it is hardly possible to distinguish with certainty between the longest possible normal half-line and the shortest extended half-line. Still, some of his examples appear quite certain, e. g.

Wanderer, 65

wintra dæl in woruldrice. Wita sceal ȝeþyldiȝ,

Judith, 273

ēades ond ellendæda. Hogedon þā eorlas,

(which is also an example of the alliteration falling on the second accented syllable in the second half-line), Andreas 1114

hyht tō hord ȝestrēonum; hunȝre wæron,

and similarly *Genesis* 2856, *Dream of the Rood* 40, *Exeter Gnostic Verses* 148, and others. Sievers's list probably does not exhaust the examples. There are several lines in Old English poems which have been denounced by critics as unmetrical monstrosities and exposed to variety of emendation which are quite correct if regarded as instances of the type mentioned above. Such is line 13 of the *Fight at Finnsburg*, probably line 39, and possibly line 24. Other examples are Waldere A 7,

ȝedrēosan tō dæȝe dryhtscipe; ac is sē dæȝ cumen,

Seafarer 23,

Stormas þær stān-clifu bēotan, þær him stearn oncwæð,

Exodus 161 (if MS. hwæl=hwēol),

on hwæl hrēopon (MS. hwreopon) herefuzolas hilde ȝrædiȝe.

In these cases critics and editors generally suppose that part of a line has dropped out and that two lines have consequently been telescoped into one. But where the line makes sense emendation is unnecessary.

If these views on Old English metre be accepted the following text of the *Fight at Finnsburg* will not appear too outrageously conservative.

Some explanations must be first of all made. When an emendation is accepted which involves the change of part of a word in Hickeys's text, the change is indicated by italics and Hickeys's reading is given at the foot of the page. The name of the critic who first suggested the emendation is given in the notes. The reasons why the ȝ of Old English manuscripts should be printed ȝ and not changed to g will be found on p. XXVIII of Mr. Chambers's Introduction to his edition of *Beowulf*. My notes deal solely with the text. They particularly criticise the emendations accepted by Holthausen (*Beowulf nebst den kleineren Denkmälern der Heldensage*, 3rd edition, 1912), Sedgfield (*Beowulf*, 2nd edition, 1913), and Chambers (*Beowulf*, 1st edition, 1914). Schücking's edition of *Beowulf* with the *Fight at Finnsburg* is unfortunately

not obtainable at present. When earlier critics and editors are mentioned in the notes, the following are the works to which reference is made:—

- Grundtvig. *Beowulf's Drape*. (Copenhagen) 1820.
 Conybeare. *Illustrations of Anglo-Saxon Poetry*. 1826.
 Kemble. *Beowulf*. 2nd edition, 1835.
 Ettmüller. *Engla and Seaxna Scopas and Bōceras*. 1850.
 Thorpe. *Beowulf*. 1855.
 Grein. *Bibliothek der ags. Poesie*. 1857.
 Rieger. *Ags. Lesebuch*. 1861.
 Heyne. *Beowulf*. 1st edition, 1863.
 Bugge.¹ *Tideskrift for Philologi og Paedagogik*, VIII. 305 ff.
 Wülker. Revised edition of Grein's *Bibliothek*, 1881.
 Bugge.² *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literature*, XII. 23 ff. 1886.
 Trautmann. *Finn und Hildebrand. Bonn Beiträge VII*. 1903.
 Boer. *Finnsage und Nibelungensage*, in *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum*, XLVII. 125 ff. 1904.

THE FIGHT AT FINNSBURG

. [hor]nas byrnað næfre."

Hlēoþrode ðā heaðo-geonȝ cyninȝ:—

1. H. -nas. 2. H. hearo.

1. (*hor*)nas. In Hickeys's transcript the fragment begins with *nas*. Line 4 makes it certain that this is the last part of *hornas*. Rieger was the first to read this. He has been followed by all editors.

Chambers is probably wrong in ending the line with a mark of interrogation. Boer points out that (HOR)nas byrnað næfre is the last part of a statement. The speech of the watcher seems to have run, "I see a light, and yet it is not dawn, nor is a dragon flying through the air, nor are the horns of this hall burning." The "battle-young king" (most probably Husef) replies, and recapitulates the denials of the watcher before giving the true explanation (line 5) of the gleam of light which has been seen.

2. *Hlēoþrode ðā*. Holthausen reads *Ða hlēoþrode*. The metrical reason for this change, to avoid a form of type E unusual in the first half-line, I have above tried to show insufficient. Holthausen also points out that in lines 13, 14, 18, 28, 43, 46 ðā precedes the verb. This is certainly its usual position, but there is no reason why the poet may not here have departed from the customary order, perhaps for the sake of variety.

heaðo-geonȝ. Hickeys, *hearȝeonȝ*. Grundtvig's emendation. Kemble and Ettmüller read *heoroȝeonȝ*. If the word were a compound of *heoro* and *geonȝ* Hickeys's reading might be allowed to stand (cf. note on *heordra*, line 26), but "fiercely-young" gives no good sense. *Heaðo-geonȝ* has been read by all recent editors.

- “Ne ðis ne dajað ēastan, ne hēr draca ne flēoƷeð,
 ne hēr ðisse healle hornas ne byrnað,
 5 ac hēr forþ fērað, fuʒelas sinʒað,
 ʒylleð ʒræʒ-hama, ʒūð-wudu hlynneð,
 scyld scefte oncwȳð. Nū scȳneð þes mōna
 wāðol under wolcnum; nū ārišað wēa-dāda,
 ðe ðisne folces nīð fremman willað.
 10 Ac onwacniʒeað nū, wīʒend mīne,
 habbað ēowre līnda, hīcʒeaþ on ellen,

3. H. eastun. 5. H. berað. 11. H. Landa, hie ʒeaþ.

3. *eastan*, Grundtvig; Hickes, *eastun*. As has already been mentioned, Hickes here probably misread the *a* of the lost manuscript as *u*.

5. *fērað*. Hickes reads, *ac hēr forþ berað fuʒelas sinʒað*. There is no object to *berað*, and so the two half-lines do not combine. Most editors suppose that between them two half-lines have been lost. Sedgefield and Chambers therefore read:—

ac hēr forþ berað
 fuʒelas sinʒað.

A scribe may have made the mistake from his eye being caught by the alliteration of *fuʒelas* to *forþ*. There have been several modern attempts to fill up the lacuna. The other alternative, the change of *berað* to *fērað*, was suggested by Grundtvig, and has been adopted by Holthausen. It seems quite as probable as the supposition that two half-lines have dropped out. The use of *fērað* with unexpressed subject, of the approaching enemies, is quite in keeping with the abrupt style of the fragment.

fuʒelas. Holthausen, *fuʒelas*, i. e. *fuʒlas*. Holthausen is fond of omitting letters in this way in order to normalise the spelling.

6. *hlynneð*. Holthausen, *hlynneð*, another unnecessary normalisation.

8. *wāðol*. Holthausen, Sedgefield, and Chambers all read *wāðol*, with short *a*. So most annotators. Holthausen translates “full moon,” Chambers says that exact meaning is unknown. The Middle High German word *wadel* is generally quoted in illustration and in support of the *ā*. Boer quotes the Middle High German dictionary to show that *wadel* refers to the various phases of the crescent and waning moon with the exception of the full moon. This at least negatives Holthausen’s translation of *wāðol*; Boer himself suggests “inconstant.” In view of all this doubt and variety of opinion regarding *wāðol* it seems simpler and safer to adopt *wāðol*, suggested by Toller in his *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. *Wāðol*, if the right reading, would be an adjective formed from *wāð*, a wandering, roving. The sentence would then mean that the wandering moon comes out from the clouds and enables Husef to recognise the attacking Frisians.

11. *habbað ēowre līnda*. Hickes has *landa*, which gives no sense. As Chambers points out in his footnote, the obvious correction is *līnda*, suggested by Bugge.¹—But he rejects this as “unsatisfactory from the point of view of alliteration. I have tried to show above there is no real justification for this opinion. Since *līnda* is “the obvious correction,” it should be accepted even

pindað on orde, wesað onmōde."

- Ðā ārās mæni; gold-hladen ðe;rn, gyrde hine his swurde;
 ðā tō dura ēodon drihtlice cempa,
15 Si;eferð and Eaha, hyra sword ;etu;on,
 and æt oþrum durum Ordlāf and ;ūþlāf,
 and Hen;est sylf hwearf him on lāste.
 Ðā ;yrt ;ārulf ;ūðere styrode,

if there results a half-line in which the verb alliterates in preference to the noun. Chambers and Holthausen read *habbað ēowre hlencan*. This was suggested by Bugge², who quoted *Exodus* 215 ff.:—*Moyses bebēad eorlas . . . habban heora hlencan, hyc;an on ellen*. But even the likeness in the phraseology is not enough to excuse the large change of *landa* to *hlencan*, and Bugge rightly preferred *linda*. Sedgefield, following Heyne, reads *hebbað ēowre handa*. This is much less satisfactory, since two words are changed instead of one and since the sense is not particularly good. The faint analogy of meaning in *Beowulf* 2375 does not add much support.

hic;eap, Grundtvig, an obvious correction of Hickes's *hie ;eap*. Holthausen places his full stop of omission below the *e*. There is less excuse than usual for this normalising, as the insertion of an *e* to denote the palatal pronunciation of a preceding consonant or preceding consonants was very common in Old English.

12. *pindað*. Sedgefield alters to *windað*, which until Trautmann was supposed to be the reading by Hickes. There is no need for any change, as *pindað*, literally "swell," can here have the metaphorical sense of "show your temper," "show your courage." The alliteration rests on *orde* and *onmōde*.

13. Sedgefield and Chambers make no alteration in this line, but the latter in his note considers it "likely enough that two lines have here been telescoped into one." Holthausen expands to two normal lines:—

 Ðā ārās [of ræste rūmheort] mæni;
 gold hladen [;um] -ðe;rn, gyrde hine his swurde.

I have sought to show above that such expansion is quite unnecessary. The insertion of *;um* before *ðe;rn*, to prevent a half-line of the metrical type which we actually have in line 2 a, is doubly so.

15. *Si;eferð*. Holthausen has *Si;eferð*. Even though *Si;eferð* corresponds to the *Sāferð* of *Widsiþ* 31, the reason why the name should be *Si;ferð* is not obvious.

Eaha. Holthausen, following Bugge,² has *Eawa*, a name found in the Mercian genealogies. The change is probable but cannot be certain.

17. Holthausen adopts the improbable punctuation, *and Hen;est sylf; hwearf him on lāste*, which presumably makes *hwearf* refer to the *heapo;eorn; cynin;* of line 2.

18. *;ārulf ;ūðere styrode*. All three editors unnecessarily alter the text. Sedgefield reads *styrede*. Except as a normalising such a change has nothing to defend it. *Styrian* belongs to Class I of the Weak verbs, and *styrede* is the regular form of its past tense, but in later West Saxon such verbs often had *-ode*

- 20 ðæt hē swā frēolic feorh forman siþe
 tō ðære healle durum hyrsta ne bære,
 nū hyt niþa heard ānyman wolde;
 ac hē frægn ofer eal undearninȝa,
 dēor-mōd hæleþ, hwā ðā duru hēolde.
 “Siȝeferþ is mīn nama, cweþ hē, ic eom Secȝena lēod,
 25 wreccea wīde cūð. Fæla ic wēana ȝebād,
 20. H. bæran. 25. H. wrecen, weuna.

for *-ede* on the analogy of the Weak verbs of Class II. Cf. *Sievers, Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, 401 note 2. In the West Saxon prose *Genesis*, chapter 7 verse 21 we find *eall flāsc þe oðer eorðan styrode*. Holthausen, following Ettmüller, reads *stȳrde*. *Stȳran*, to restrain, certainly gives better sense here than *styrian*, to stir, incite, but as it regularly governs the dative of the person, we should expect not *ȝārulf* but *ȝārulfe*. Accordingly Chambers, following Trautmann, reads *ȝarulfe* as well as *stȳrde*. He thinks moreover that by reading *ȝarulfe* “the metre of the line is improved.” There can certainly be two opinions about this; the change deprives the half-line of double alliteration. The double emendation is suspicious, and in any case badly offends against the maxim of the “sporting chance.” From the meaning “to stir, incite” *styrian* could easily have developed the meaning “to exhort,” which here gives excellent sense.

20. *bære*. Hickes, *bæran*. Kemble’s emendation must be accepted, as *hē* (*ȝārulf*) in line 19 is the subject.

22. *eal*. Holthausen follows Trautmann in reading *ealle*. The change is to prevent the alliteration falling only on the last syllable of the half-line. I have tried to show above that there is nothing very unusual in this.

24. *cweþ hē*. Holthausen and Sedgefield follow Rieger in omitting *cweþ hē*. Chambers retains, but points out in a note that the phrase is “hypermetrical, and doubtless the insertion of some copyist.” Even with *cweþ hē* included, however, the line would not be entirely unmetrical. It is similar in form to line 13 and (probably) line 39. I have shown above that such lines occur in other poems. In all three cases in the *Fight at Finnsburg* there is only single alliteration; Sievers in *Altgermanische Metrik* points out that in *Schwellverse* double alliteration is usual, but admits that lines with only single alliteration are not unknown. At the same time it is very probable that *cweþ hē* is an insertion by some scribe. Neither *cweþ* (for *cwæþ*) *hē* nor *cwæþ hē* occurs elsewhere in Old English verse, although, as Holthausen mentions in his note, *quað hē* is to be found in Old Saxon poetry. A speech beginning abruptly without any introductory words about the speaker would be quite in keeping with the rather breathless style of the fragment, and of course there is nothing unlikely in an unappreciative scribe seeking to remedy the slight lack of clearness by an addition of his own.

Secȝena. Holthausen, for unexplained reasons, places his mark of omission below the second *e*.

25. *wreccea*. Hickes, *wrecen*. Grundtvig was the first to change *t* to *c*; he read *wrecena*. Thorpe read *wrecca*, which fits the sense, Grein *wreccea*,

heordra hilda. Ðē is ȝȳt hēr witod,
swæper ðū sylf tō mē sēcean wyllē.”

Ðā wæs on healle wæl-slihta ȝehlyn,
sceolde cellod bord cēnum on handa,
30 bān-helm berstan —buruh-ðelu dynede—,

29. H. celæs borð ȝenumon.

which is closer to Hickes's reading. Holthausen places his mark of omission below the second *e*, and therefore reads *wrecca*. See note on *hicȝeað*, line 11.

wēana. Hickes, *weuna*. See note on *ēastan*, line 3.

26. *heordra* Holthausen, Sedgefield, and Chambers alter to *heardra*. Kemble was the first to read *heardra*, not as an emendation, but mistakenly as the original. The change is unnecessary. Confusion of *eo* and *ea* was very frequent in the Northumbrian dialect, and was also not unknown in Mercian and Kentish. Cf. Sievers, *Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, 150, 3 notes 1, 2, 3. Instances in West Saxon are almost limited to *fela*, *feola*, *feala*, “much.” If *The Fight at Finnsburg* was composed or first written down in the north, *heordra* for *heardra* can easily be justified as a surviving Northumbrian form, if in the midlands or south, the form is still possible. Wülker retains *heordra*.

27. *sēcean*. Holthausen, *sēcēan*, i. e. *sēcan*. See note on *hicȝeað*, line 11.

28. *on healle*. Since Ettmüller all editors have changed to *on wealle*. Chambers adds a note that “the alliteration demands the change.” This is not the case; the alliteration falls on *healle* and *ȝehlyn*, and the line merely offends against the metrical rule that it should fall on the first accented syllable of the second half-line. I have shown above that exceptions to this rule are fairly numerous, and that it should not be the sole support for an alteration of the text. Another exception in the *Fight at Finnsburg* is line 41. Moreover, *on healle* gives better sense than *on wealle*. “Then was in the hall the noise of slaughter” is distinctly superior to “Then was on the wall the sound of slaughter.” Yet editors, enamoured of metrical rule, weaken the sense rather than permit an irregularity.

29. *sceolde*. Holthausen marks the first *e* for omission; a more unnecessary normalising could hardly be imagined.

cellod bord cenum on handa. Hickes has *celæs borð ȝenumon handa* the first three words all obviously corrupt. The simple change of *borð* to *bord* was made by Kemble, and Grein emended *ȝenumon* to *cēnum on*, which suits both alliteration and sense. The improvement of *celæs* has on the other hand called forth much dispute. Most editors, including Sedgefield and Chambers, follow Grein in reading *cellod* (Sedgefield, *celod*), since *cellod bord* occurs in *Maldon* 283. The meaning of *cellod* is uncertain, but the emendation is as likely as any. Mr. Chambers, however, seems to exaggerate badly when in his note he writes that a comparison with *Maldon* 283 “leaves little doubt as to the correctness of the restoration.” After all, the change of *celæs* to *cellod* is pretty violent; Holthausen's reading *clāne*, in the sense of “shining,” is quite as near to the original and almost as probable.

30. *buruh-ðelu dynede*. Holthausen marks for omission the second *u* of *buruh-ðelu*. But in later Old English a vowel tended to develop between *r* and a guttural. Cf. Wright, *Old English Grammar*, 220.

- oð æt ðære ȝūðe ȝārulf ȝecranȝ,
 ealra ærest eorð-būendra,
 ȝūðlāfes sunu, ymbe hyne ȝōdra fæla,
 hwearflīcra hræw. Hræfen wandrode,
 35 sweart and sealo-brūn; swurd-lēoma stōd,
 swylce eal Finns-buruh fȳrenu wære.
 Ne ȝefræȝn ic næfre wurplīcor æt werā hilde
 sixtiȝ siȝe-beorna sēl ȝebæran,
 34. H. hwearflacra hrær. 38. H. ȝebærann.

I follow Holthausen's punctuation, making *buruhðelu dynede* a parenthetical exclamation. The punctuation by Sedgefield and Chambers, a full stop or semicolon preceding and a comma following, seems decidedly inferior.

33. *ymbe*. Holthausen *ymbe*, for reasons not stated.

34. *hwearflīcra hræw*. Hickes has *hwearflacra hrær*, which is certainly corrupt. Of the many emendations suggested that which gives sense and is at the same time closest to Hickes's reading is Grundtvig's *hwearflīcra hræw*. Grammatically this would be in apposition to *ȝōdra fæla* in the preceding line. *Hwearflīc*, in the form *hwerflīc*, occurs in Alfred's translation of Boethius, XI. 1, *hū hwerflīce ðās woruldsælpa sint*, "how fleeting are these earthly blessings." *Hwearflīcra hræw* would therefore mean "the corpses of the fleeting," i. e., "of the mortal," "of the dead," and not, as Chambers rather obscurely translates, "of the swift." Sedgefield adopts Grundtvig's reading. Holthausen, beginning a new sentence, has *Hwearf blācra hrēas*, "the troop of the pale fell," which gives no better sense and is farther from the original. Chambers adopts a suggestion by Bugge²:—

Hwearf flacra hræw hræfen, wandrode,

"the quickly-moving raven hovered over the corpses." This is close enough to the original, but open to several objections. The order of the words is very contorted; the adjective *flacra* qualifies the subject *hræfen* but is separated from it by the object *hræw*. *Hwear fan*, except for Crist 485, where it has the sense of "to convert," seems to be invariably intransitive. And sense and metre are at variance; one should expect the cæsura to come after and not before *hræfen*. It is curious to find Mr. Chambers, who so often lays great stress on metrical propriety, tolerating such a line. For a thorough upheaval of the text we turn as usual to Trautmann. He reads *hræw-blācra hwearf hræfen wundrode*, "the raven wondered at the troop of the corpse-pale," and thinks his own *wundrode* a piece of fine poetry.

36. *fȳrenu* Holthausen, *fȳrenu*, i. e. *fȳrnu*. Quite an unnecessary omission; see Sievers, *Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, 296 note 2.

38. *siȝe-beorna*. Holthausen places his mark of omission below the first *e*. See note on *Siȝeferð* line 17.

ȝebæran. Hickes, *ȝebærann*. Grundtvig's emendation has been followed by most editors; *ȝebærann* must be merely a miswriting or an idiosyncrasy of spelling by the scribe of the lost manuscript. Chambers retains *ȝebæran* without comment.

- ne nēfre swānas hwītne medo sēl forȝyldan
 40 ȝonne Hnæfe ȝuldan his hæȝ-stealdas.
 Hiȝ fuhton fif daȝas, swā hyra nān ne fēol
 driht-ȝesīða, ac hīȝ ȝā duru hēoldon.
 Ðā ȝewāt him wund hæleð on wæȝ ȝanȝan,
 sæde þæt his byrne ābrocen wære,

H. swa noc.

39. *nēfre*. Following Grundtvig, most editors, including Holthausen and Chambers, change *nēfre* to *næfre*. Even though *næfre* occurs two lines above, the emendation is not necessary; *æ*, *i*-umlaut of *a*, became *ē* in later Kentish, and here the scribe prefers the Kentish form. Wülker and Sedgefield retain *nēfre*.

swānas hwītne medo. Hickes has *swa noc hwītne medo*. Grein emended *swa noc* to *swānas*, which has been accepted by most editors. The main objection to it has been pointed out by Trautmann. In Old English *swān* (modern English "swain") elsewhere always means "swineherd," "herd." There is no other example of its use in the more general sense of "men," or even of "servants." This first appears in Middle English. If *swānas*, "men," is accepted here, one is almost bound to regard it as late Old English, the meaning influenced by Scandinavian *sveinn*, which had already widened its significance. No other satisfactory emendation of *swa noc* has yet been suggested. Holthausen, Sedgefield, and Chambers all read *swānas*. Trautmann puts forward the ingenious but unconvincing theory that *swa noc* and *hwītne* represent two attempts by a scribe to decipher *swetne* in his original.

Ettmüller changed *hwītne* to *swēlne*, which all later editors have accepted. But if *swānas* be read the change is quite unnecessary. Mead, made from honey, was of course a sweet drink, but it must have been pale-yellow in colour and could easily have been called white. In an eighteenth century cookery book, quoted in the *New English Dictionary*, there is a recipe "for making white mead." The alliteration falls on *swanas*; the line is of the same metrical type as line 13 and possibly line 24. The first half contains three accents and single alliteration. See note on line 13 and on *cweþ hē*, line 24.

41. *Hīȝ*. Holthausen *hī.ȝ*, i. e., *hī*. Another unnecessary normalising; *hī* was often written *hīȝ* in later Old English, the *ȝ* being added to show the length of the vowel. Cf. Wright, *Old English Grammar*, 6 note.

swā hyra nān ne fēol. The alliteration falls on the last stave (and the last syllable) of the second half-line. Sedgefield and Chambers make no change, though the latter in his note condemns the half-line as unmetrical. Holthausen transposes to *swā ne fēol hyra nān*. See note on *on healle*, line 28.

42. *duru*. From lines 12 to 14 it is clear that at least two doors are being defended, and therefore we should expect the plural *dura*. Very probably the final *u* is a misreading by Hickes of *a* in the manuscript, as in *eastun*, line 3, and *weuna*, line 25. But of course it is possible that the poet here thinks of one particular door. Or *duru* itself may be a plural form; cf. Wright, *Old English Grammar*, 395, or the paradigm of the U-declension in Sievers, *Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, 270. Holthausen, Sedgefield, and Chambers all retain *duru*; Chambers suggests *dura* in his note.

- 45 here-sceorpum hrōr, and ēac wæs his helm ȝȳrl.
 Ðā hine sōna fræȝn folces hyrde,
 hū ȝā wiȝend hyra wunda ȝenæson,
 oððe hwæper ȝæra hyssa

45. *here-sceorpum hrōr*. Hickes's reading is retained by Holthausen and Sedgefield. The phrase must be in apposition to *wund haleð* in line 43, and mean "active in his battle array." Chambers adopts Thorpe's emendation *here-sceop unhrōr*, which he thinks "exceedingly probable," a phrase in apposition to *byrne* in the preceding line. It would be probable enough if the natural meaning of *unhrōr*, "not stirring," "inactive," at all suited the noun *byrne*. Chambers suggests "trusty" or "useless," both meanings very forced. He adds that Thorpe's emendation has been followed by Bugge and "most editors." This last statement cannot be justified, since not only Holthausen and Sedgefield, but Rieger, Grein, Wülker and Kluge (*Lesebuch*) keep Hickes's reading. Trautmann has of course an emendation of his own.

ȝȳrl. The metre (type C) shows that *ȝȳrl* is dissyllabic, with syllabic l. It is unnecessary to expand to *ȝȳrl[e]l*, as do Holthausen and Sedgefield.

46. *Ðā hine sōna fræȝn*. Holthausen, "on metrical grounds," reads *Ðā fræȝn hine sōna*. The transposing is to suit the line to the metrical rule that the alliteration in the first half-line should not fall on the last syllable only. See note on *eal*, line 22.

With the question of the probable date and place of origin of the *Finnsburg* fragment I shall deal as briefly as possible. As preserved to us it is written in markedly late West Saxon. But it seems to be the general opinion that it resembles the greater number of Old English poems in being originally composed in the north at an early date, in the seventh or at latest the eighth century, and coming down to us in a much later West Saxon paraphrase. From analogy, of course, this is quite a probable theory. It remains to be considered whether it is in any way supported, or in any way contradicted, by the language, or the style, or the metre of the poem.

Amid the normal late West Saxon there are no form which point with any certainty to a Northern original. In line 2, *heapo-ȝeonȝ*, emended from *hearoȝeonȝ* in Hickes, shows the u-umlaut of *a* to *ea*, common in Mercian but rare in West Saxon prose. But then *heapu* is a word found only in poetry and only as the first part of compounds. It never occurs in the form *hapu*. The word *heaðurofe* appears in line 14 of the *Menologium*, which is certainly Southern in origin and probably dates from the close of the tenth century. In *sealo-brūn*, line 35, *ea* is due not to u-umlaut but to

the analogy of oblique cases where *a* broke into *ea* before *hw*. The form *scefte* in line 7, for normal *sceafte*, is not Anglian but late West-Saxon. The sole form which in any way suggests a Northern origin is *heordra* instead of *heardra* in line 26. If this is retained, it shows a confusion of *ea* and *eo* which is characteristic of Northumbrian in particular. But, as pointed out in the note, it is not unknown in the southern dialects, and in *The Philological Legend of Cynewulf* (*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America XXVII. 208*) Dr. Tupper has shown its unreliability as a criterion of dialect.

The vocabulary of the *Fight at Finnsburg* is very similar to that of the other Old English heroic poems. This in no way implies earliness of date. Poetic diction in Old English early became stereotyped; the diction of the *Fight at Finnsburg* resembles that of comparatively late poems such as *Judith* or *The Battle of Maldon* quite as much as that of early poems like *Beowulf*. There are several hapaxlegomena in the poem; these are mostly poetic compounds like *ȝūð-wudu*, *ȝold-hladen*, *siȝe-beorn*, to which many analogies could be cited. It is curious that three generally accepted emendations of obvious corruptions in Hickes's text introduce into the poem words which would point to a comparatively late date of composition. In line 29 Hickes has *celæs borð*, usually altered to *celloð bord*. The word *celloð* occurs elsewhere only in the *Battle of Maldon*, a poem of the last years of the tenth century. In line 34 Hickes reads *hwearflacra hrær*. The most economical emendation that gives good sense is *hwearflīcra hræw*. The word *hwearflīc* appears elsewhere (as *hwerflīc*) only in the translation of Boethius by King Alfred. In line 39 the *swa noc* in Hickes is almost without exception changed to *swānas*. It has been pointed out in the notes that *swānas* in the sense of "servants," "men" would point to the influence of Scandinavian *sveinn*. This would seem to suggest a date of composition subsequent to the Danish invasions. But of course no conclusion of a late date can be based on the evidence of words which after all are only nineteenth century suggestions.

Sievers has shown that a criterion of local origin is to be found in the presence of contracted forms of the second and third singular present of verbs. These, if the metre shows that they were there from the beginning, point to the south as the original home of the poem. *The Fight at Finnsburg* contains only one such form,

oncwýð in line 7. Nothing can be argued from it; the metre would bear *oncweðeð*, and *oncwýð* may therefore be only a later contraction by a Southern scribe. On the other hand the poem contains the uncontracted forms *flēoꝛeð*, line 3, and *scýneð*, line 7. It is, however, quite a mistake to say, as some critics have done, that uncontracted forms of this kind are evidence in favour of origin in the north. Poems undoubtedly Southern use either contracted or uncontracted forms according to metrical requirements. The forms *ꝥylleð*, *hlynnēð* in line 6 must not be taken into account, as they are miswritings for *ꝥyleð*, *hlyneð*, and in Weak Verbs of the first class with originally short stems contraction did not regularly take place even in West-Saxon and Kentish. Cf. Sievers, *Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, 358, 5c.

No argument in favour of early date can be found in the form *ðýrl* in line 45. The metre shows it to be dissyllabic. If it were to be pronounced, as it is written, a monosyllable, it would suggest, though certainly not prove, a date contemporary with *Beowulf* and *Genesis A*, and anterior to the poems of Cynewulf.

I have shown above that if the metre of *Beowulf* is taken as the standard that of the *Fight at Finnsburg* is markedly loose and irregular. The chief peculiarities have already been treated; additional but minor irregularities are the falling of an accent on a light word in 31a, and the awkward divorce which in line 47a the caesura makes between *hyra* and the noun it qualifies. Brandl in his *Geschichte* admits that such "metrische Fehler" are characteristic of the period after Alfred, but is disposed to attribute them to corruption of the text. This is an easy way out of the difficulty; the number and variety of the metrical irregularities, as I have tried to show above, point much rather to the conclusion that the author was a careless metrist. This in itself decides nothing about the date of composition, but while deciding nothing at least suggests that this is comparatively late. I have already mentioned that metrical license rapidly became more frequent in the period after Alfred. *Solomon and Saturn* is crowded with metrical irregularities. Those in the *Fight at Finnsburg* can easily be paralleled from the *Battle of Maldon*.

The use of the article in the fragment next requires some consideration. There are, curiously enough, no weak adjectives in it at all, so the tests of date suggested by Lichtenheld and worked out carefully by Barnouw, depending on the existence or non-

existence of the article before the weak adjective or the weak adjective and noun, cannot be applied. In any case Sarrazin has successfully exposed the untrustworthiness of these tests in his article *Zur Chronologie und Verfasserfrage ags. Dichtungen* in Volume 38 of *Englische Studien*. He has shown that their value is particularly small if they are rigidly applied to the heroic poems, because in these an archaic style early became conventional. They would place, for example, the *Battle of Maldon* earlier in date than the poems of Cynewulf, which in reality precede it by two centuries. Lichtenheld's main contention, however, that the use of the article in Old English poetry becomes commoner as time goes on, is beyond dispute, though only as a general rule. Now Brandl infers the antiquity of the *Finnsburg* fragment from the grounds that "article forms are rare and occur exclusively in the demonstrative sense of *ille*." The last part of this statement is very much open to question. Brandl cites in support lines 23, 31, 42, 47. But if these lines be examined it will be found that the translation "that" is essential in none of them. The reader may in each case translate "that" or "the" just as he pleases, and similarly in line 20, which Brandl omits to mention. In line 31 the translation "the" seems even slightly preferable, and in line 47 "those" would be distinctly awkward. Altogether the article occurs five times in the forty-eight lines. This is, roughly, once in ten lines; in *Beowulf*, according to Lichtenheld, it occurs once in eleven lines, in *Andreas* once in seven lines, in the *Battle of Maldon* once in four lines. According to this criterion, therefore, the *Fight at Finnsburg* is contemporary with *Beowulf* and much earlier than the *Battle of Maldon*. But the untrustworthiness of such a conclusion should be obvious. The *Fight at Finnsburg*, preserved to us a mere fragment of about fifty lines, is far too brief to make the test of any real value. The presence of two article forms in the two lines now lost which originally preceded or followed what remains to us would bring the percentage down with a run. All that we can safely say is that the scarcity of articles in the poem suggests a comparatively early date, but with no more certainty than the irregular metre suggests, as we have seen, a comparatively late date. For it may easily be accounted for by the imitation of the conventional epic style. In the *Battle of Brunanburh*, which must have been composed shortly after the battle itself in 937 A. D., the article occurs seven times in seventy-

two lines, or proportionally rather less frequently than in *Finnsburg*. This alone is enough to show the absurdity of asserting the *Fight at Finnsburg* to be a poem of early date on the sole evidence of the rarity of the article. Five out of the seven instances of the article in *Brunnanburh*, moreover, occur before weak adjectives, according to idiom, and as there are no weak adjectives in the *Finnsburg* fragment its five examples of the article in forty-eight lines should more strictly be compared with the remaining two examples in seventy-two lines in the tenth century poem.

As has already been mentioned in the first part of this article, a very striking characteristic of the *Finnsburg* fragment is the rapidity of its narrative. Brandl calculates for the whole poem a length of little over two hundred lines, and declares that this is the extent not of an epic but of a lay (*Lied*). The speeches, compared with those in *Beowulf* or the *Waldhere* fragments or the warlike *Exodus* are extremely brief, and the story of the five days battle, though picturesque enough, is curt in the extreme. *Beowulf* has on the whole a very leisurely progress; the *Fight at Finnsburg* is distinctly in a hurry. In its style, epithets and variations are much less frequent than usual. Brandl seems to conclude from this that the *Fight at Finnsburg* represents a type of narrative poem which is older than the epic, the *Spielmannslied* or Minstrel's Lay, from which the epic developed by a process of expansion. This is quite possible; but it is equally possible that the reverse may be the case. *The Fight at Finnsburg* may quite well be a shortened form of an earlier epic. Some of the old ballads seem to be condensed forms of earlier romances, and something similar may have taken place in Old English times. At any rate an early date for the poem would have to be proved or made very probable by some piece of internal or external evidence before Brandl's theory could be unreservedly accepted. And such evidence there is none.

To conclude, it is impossible to decide either the original home or the approximate date of composition of the *Fight at Finnsburg*. There is no certain sign in the poem itself that it was originally Northern or Anglian. There is equally no certain sign that it was originally Southern. We have evidence that the story of Finn was known in both parts of England. The occurrence of the Finn episode in *Beowulf* shows that it was known in the north, while the occurrence in a Kentish charter of two place-names

Hokes clif and *Henꝛstes earas* proves acquaintance with it in the south. Its original date of composition may have been any time from the seventh to the eleventh century inclusive. The many metrical irregularities are a slight ground for the presumption that it is late rather than early.

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